

VZCZCXRO7213
OO RUEHLH RUEHPW
DE RUEHIL #0482 0321243
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 011243Z FEB 08
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4809
INFO RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 8105
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 2737
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 8818
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 4719
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 3408
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 000482

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/01/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PK](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: PUBLIC SHRUGS AFTER RETIRED GENERALS CENSURE
MUSHARRAF

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (U) In a January 31 meeting, a group of retired army officers urged Musharraf to step down and hand over power to deposed Supreme Court Chief Justice Chaudhry, who could then create a national unity government. The group also endorsed the lawyers' movement, demanded the government appoint former Supreme Court Justice Bhagwandas as head of the Election Commission, and asked the government to release A.Q. Khan from house arrest or charge him with treason. Prominent ex-officers, including ret. Gen Faiz Ali Chishti, former army Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Gen Mirza Aslam Baig, and former Inter-Services Intelligence director Gen Hameed Gul, allegedly attended the event.

12. (SBU) All local English dailies reported on the event, with some providing front page coverage. Editorials, however, pilloried the group's announcement. The press scathingly noted that these were the same men who mismanaged the state, exploited their office for personal gain, and overstepped their writ when serving on active military duty. Thus, the papers claim, this group has little room to chastise Musharraf. Some editorials called on the group to apologize for their own misconduct.

13. (C) Comment: While the western press has interpreted the call of the retired officers as proof that Musharraf's base has eroded, we find the local press reaction much more interesting. We see this as an indication of just how much the public wants the Army to retreat from politics and return to its barracks. Retired generals criticizing Musharraf is nothing new. A much smaller group of civilians and former generals delivered a similar letter to Musharraf asking him to resign in July 2006. There is also a personal element to this week's meeting--former COAS Baig and Musharraf have a deteriorating personal relationship that dates back to Musharraf's public criticism of former COAS Baig in 2004. End comment.
PATTERSON